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CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIES OF RELIGION

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In the present essay I propose to compare certain typical religious philosophies, with a view to discovering what degree of religious hope they justify; or what, in view of the nature of reality, they make of religious ideals. Philosophy, viewing experience roundly, taking into account both the uttermost that man wants and the evidence of reality, has reached different conclusions as to the relation between the two, or as to the consequent status of religious values in the light of critical reflection. There seem to me to be four typical philosophical verdicts of this sort: *first*, that the ideals of religion are illusory and vain; *second*, that its ideals are self-sufficient, and independent of reality; *third*, that its ideals define, or coincide with, reality; *fourth*, that its ideals are progressively efficacious, or may be *realized*. These four philosophies of religion may conveniently be termed: *disillusionism*, *symbolism*, *idealism*, and *progressivism*.

1. By "disillusionism" I mean the view that utterly discredits the religious ideals. This view may be reached by an examination of reality, and the discovery that reality neither corresponds nor responds to ideals. Cosmic reality may reveal itself as inherently hostile or malicious, and so justify only pessimistic dread and loathing. Or it may assume an aspect of indifference, to which man must accommodate himself by preoccupation with secular affairs, or by a purely intellectual contemplation of its necessity. A similar view may be reached by an examination of the desiderative consciousness itself, and

the discovery that ideals are only instruments of torture, such that the effort to realize them only serves to re-instate them with their accompanying sense of suspense, deficiency, and failure. The only remedy is to cease from hope altogether and achieve entire renunciation. I do not think it necessary to estimate this type of philosophy from the standpoint of religious values, inasmuch as it defines its place at the lower end of the scale. It confines itself to the denial of positive values, or to the assertion of the negative value of relief from misery. It imputes no specific hopefulness whatsoever either to the cosmic reality or to the works of the religious imagination. The remaining types of philosophy of religion differ from this first in that they encourage hope. These three remaining types may be illustrated from contemporary thought by three books—Höffding's *Philosophy of Religion*, Hocking's *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, and Hobhouse's *Development and Purpose*.¹

2. I am using the term "symbolism" somewhat loosely to mean that philosophy which proposes to confine religious value to the free creations of the religious imagination. Such a philosophy may agree with the first type in finding reality uncongenial to man's hopes, or it may find the facts doubtful; but in either case it invites man not to renounce his ideals, but to cultivate, cherish, and take refuge in them.

The chief significance of Höffding's *Philosophy of Religion* lies in its divorce of religion and metaphysics. The author professes himself to be idealistic in faith, and he even employs certain of the characteristic fallacies of idealism.² But he devotes the earlier part of his book to showing the theoretical invalidity of the distinctively religious ideas. These ideas give "no explanation of

¹ I do not mean to assert that any of these books is to be identified exclusively with that theory which I have chosen it to represent, but only that the theory in question is peculiarly characteristic of it.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 72-74.

special events," "are not capable of affording a conclusion for scientific thought," and "exhibit the character of figures rather than of concepts." "If," he proceeds, "the religious ideas are to have any significance at all, therefore, it can only be in serving as symbolical expressions for the feeling, the aspirations, and the wishes of men in their struggle for existence."³ The feeling which is peculiar to religion is "the feeling which is determined by the fate of values."⁴ Religion springs from the hope or assumption "that value will be preserved."⁵ In expressing this hope, the imagination draws upon actual relations "between value and reality as experienced by us."⁶ But it attaches to this relation a general or cosmic significance. "In all symbolisation, ideas taken from narrow although more intuitable relations are used as expressions for relations which, on account of their exaltedness and ideality, cannot be directly expressed. . . . A particular element of existence is promoted to be the most characteristic mark of the whole of existence; it is treated as though it entirely summed up the relation between value and reality given in experience."⁷ And similarly myth, legend, and dogma involve the transference to relations and events of the external world of ideas strictly applicable only to inward or human relations.⁸ In this extension they have only a poetical significance.⁹ The function of religion lies in this faculty of forming symbols. The religious consciousness must entertain "no mistrust of the instinctive formation of re-

³ *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 93. Owing to our scientific ignorance of those ultimate matters to which our religious ideas refer, Höfding refers to his view as "Critical Monism." He objects to the term "agnosticism," so it appears, only because this view "is inclined to assert that 'the Unknowable' is entirely different from everything that appears in experience." Cf. pp. 88, 89.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 207, 208.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-203.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207. Poetry is the only means of access to the "highest," and *may* be "a more perfect expression of the highest than any scientific concept could ever be" (p. 376). Were Höfding to claim to know what he here only ventures to suggest as possible, his philosophy of religion would pass over to the idealistic type.

ligious ideas," and must break down the present "barriers of creed and dogma" in order to be "free and positive" in its production.¹⁰

In judging this type of religious philosophy it is important, first of all, to recognize that religious ideals are avowedly regarded as expressions of human needs.¹¹ They signify not the most we know concerning existence at large, but what we like to think, the most hopeful cosmic notion that we can form. They are the cosmic analogies not of the necessary, typical, or most probable experiences of relation between value and existence, but of those selected experiences in which value is "conserved." Now if this were all, this type of philosophy would at worst be guilty of belittling religion by confining its values to the values of fancy or fiction. Religious ideals would possess value in so far as pretty, congenial, quieting, or stimulating. Man is surely entitled to avail himself of such values. But it is clear that they are values of small magnitude. They attach only to fleeting images, and they satisfy only momentarily, or in the last extremity. They are comparable to the purely sensuous aesthetic values, or to the medicinal tonics. There can be no objection to fiddling while Rome is burning, or telling Boccaccio-*tales* while the plague is raging, provided the fire and plague cannot be extinguished. The mirage is the greatest possible good to the man who is dying in the desert, provided no water is in reach; and there are doubtless situations which justify the ostrich in hiding his head in the sand. Such values are values of last resort, a consolation when all is lost. And provided such be indeed the human situation, a religion of deliberate picture-building stands justified.

But there is a second consideration that alters the aspect of such a philosophy of religion. The ideals of religion, its myths, legends, symbols, and dogmas, not

¹⁰ *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 208-209. Cf. p. 350.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

only spring from human needs, but *they are believed*. To this fact Höffding does not attach sufficient importance. He does not sufficiently emphasize the difference between the augur who sees the imaginative origin of these ideals and the layman who accepts them in good faith as an account of reality. Viewed in this light religious ideals become illusions—and as illusions they conflict with cognition; as when the ostrich for hiding his head in the sand fails to perceive and avail himself of means of escape. “What would make the preaching of the Gospel utterly impossible,” says Santayana, “would be the admission that it had no authority to proclaim what has happened or what is going to happen, either in this world or in another. . . . Even the pagan poets, when they devised a myth, half believed in it for a fact.”¹² In stating this undeniable truth Santayana has in mind the proposal of certain modernists to rid Christian dogma altogether of cognitive import. A dogma, according to LeRoy, remains the same, provided the conduct and feeling it inspires are the same. The dogma of transubstantiation is a means of stimulating a form of ritual or a kind of mystical experience.¹³ But the fact is that dogmatic formulas not only refer to facts and events, but *mean* facts and events, together with all their implications. They generate plans and expectations consistent with their real meaning, and could not be varied in this objective reference without modifying the attitude of the believer. Suppose that a man plans with joy to go to New York to meet his sweetheart upon her arrival from Europe. The dogma in this case is the proposition that a real sweetheart is in fact arriving on a real steamer at a specific time and place. Suppose now that we substitute another formula. A rich uncle has died in New York and left the man a considerable fortune which is to be put into his hands by the executors. The plan and

¹² *Kinds of Doctrine*, pp. 32–33.

¹³ Cf. Santayana: *op. cit.*, p. 45, note.

the emotion are the same. He still leaves with great joy for New York, and perhaps by the same train. These two propositions then are dogmatically the same, or constitute the same dogma. But it is clear that their emotional and practical implications only very partially coincide. They will *not* in the long run lead to the same response. Nor could any two formulas be thus identical so long as they remained two in their reference to facts and events. Such identity could be obtained only by altering the dogma to read: "Good news from New York. Come at once. Imagine, if necessary, that your sweetheart has arrived from Europe or that a rich uncle has left you a fortune." But in this case the dogma consists in the first statement, which the man is asked to take literally. And note that if he were simply asked to imagine that there was good news from New York, he might play with the idea if he had nothing better to do; but he would do nothing about it, unless indeed he were unfortunate enough to succumb to its suggestive power and pass from conscious fancy to misleading and dangerous illusion.

In other words, religious ideals are ordinarily believed. As beliefs they determine action uniquely. And in that case the profitableness of the action depends on the truth and not on the hopefulness of the belief. Furthermore, the hopefulness of the belief is a positive danger in that it tends to lead to the acceptance of false belief, and so both to the loss of truth and the misdirection of action. If, on the other hand, religious ideals were universally regarded as the work of fancy, they would cease altogether to play the important rôle which they have filled in historical religions. The average worshipper would say with Bishop Butler: "Religion is true or it is not. If it be not, there is no reason for any concern about it."¹⁴

¹⁴ From the Sermon on Self Deceit, quoted by Arnold, *St. Paul and Protestantism*, p. 239.

The fundamental objection to a religious philosophy of the type represented by Höfding lies in its obscuring the trivial amount of the values of the religious imagination, consciously recognized as such, when compared with the values of true belief, or of the cosmic reality which true belief may reveal. The risk of error far outweighs the advantage of subjective taste, peace, or buoyancy. At best these values should be regarded as supplementary or as compensatory, when the possibilities of truth and reality have been exhausted. Both the types of religious philosophy which remain recognize this principle. They look for religious values in the nature of things rather than in the content of ideals as such. They differ in that idealism regards ideals as determinative of reality or as possessing metaphysical validity, whereas realism or progressivism regards ideals as efficacious or capable of realizing themselves in time. Let us turn next to idealism.

3. Under the label of "idealism" I have here loosely grouped not only tendencies that are ordinarily so termed, but also tendencies that would usually be labelled pragmatism, mysticism, or absolutism. The common ground among these tendencies is the ontological status of the religious ideal. There is an important difference of method and argument between the version which would assert that "the ideal is the real" and the version which would assert that "the real is the ideal." The exponents of the former version would contend that ideals have ontological validity in proportion to the degree of satisfaction they afford. The very fact that an idea does express desire, aspiration, or hope would be taken as giving it a certain guarantee of truth. The exponents of the latter version would propose rather to render the ideal consonant with reality in its ultimate metaphysical aspect, or would find the ideal and the real in one deeper experience of the ideal-real. Thus Professor Hocking

would mean by reality "that which first is, and afterward is in accord with our purposes," by which he means, if I mistake him not, that reality prescribes our purposes. For reality to be independent of man means that man is dependent on reality.¹⁵ Although I shall be dealing immediately with this latter version, I shall have in mind the fundamental contention common to both versions—the contention, namely, that the supreme reality and the supreme ideal are one and the same thing.

Professor Hocking thus records his acceptance of reality as the proper locus of religious values: "I believe, with McTaggart, that men have no right to the satisfactions which their religion affords them except as they earn that right by successful metaphysical thought. We cannot pass at once from our needs to the satisfaction thereof, without considering what that reality is from which we must obtain satisfaction. 'What people want,' says McTaggart, 'is a religion they can believe to be true'; than which nothing could be better said. . . . God can be of any worth to man only in so far as he is a *known* God."¹⁶

In what sense then is God known? Hocking's fundamental argument runs somewhat as follows: To know at all is to know socially. In knowing nature I share the content of other minds, and am acquainted with other minds as fellow-knowers. As our author expresses it, "we look at nature through the eyes of a social world." "This present world of nature *is* known by me as being, in just this sense, a common world: it seems to me, indeed, that it is *not otherwise known*—that is, that a knowledge of Other Knower is an integral part of the simplest knowledge of Nature itself."¹⁷ God, I take it, appears upon the scene at the point at which Other Mind

¹⁵ *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 161, 572.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 214–215.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 268, 269.

is capitalized; which is the point at which cognitive companionship is correlated with the permanent and orderly system of nature.¹⁸

But to be God in the religious sense this absolute and unfailing Other Mind must reconcile me unqualifiedly to my world. It must enable me to find perfection in things as they are, to find the most real also the most good. "We must find some worth in God," says Hocking, "that we cannot find in the forward look of evolution. . . . We must be free to open ourselves, wholly, in imagination and in fact, if need be, to the *whole* of human experience."¹⁹ In short, though we know all that there is to be known, we must have no regrets. But how does the existence of a Knower of the cosmic order make this possible? There is only one clear answer that I can gather from our text. "The presence of a companion Mind, standing outside the arena of human effort with its contrasts of good and evil, may be found in experience to transmute evil into good."²⁰ "That pain which is taken in common, like effort which is carried on in common, is found through the association to lose its hardness."²¹ In other words, whatever be the misery of existence or the tragedy of the spectacle it affords, God and I can endure it together. Like bereaved parents, we may extract a last consolation from the fact that we have each other.

In addition to this bare presence, gratifying to my social instincts, God is said to possess a certain moral value or "justice" in his impartiality, "a justice which so strongly resembles an indifferent treatment of the righteous and the unrighteous."²² How this detach-

¹⁸ I do not wish here to examine the validity of this argument, except so far as to say that it appears to me to illustrate the characteristic idealistic fallacy of identifying objects of knowledge with their cognitive rôle, and then inventing a type of cognition that shall sustain them during the lapses of finite cognition. I am here concerned not with the constructive arguments but with the religious import of the conclusion.

¹⁹ Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 218.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 331.

ment and impartiality is distinguished from the indifference of fate or mechanism is not clear. Even granting the author's doubtful claim that the essential morality of man is "that he make himself universal," one does not see that man is brought to this escape from his "self-enclosedness" any more effectually by the idea of a being that contemplates "the contrasts of good and evil" from above, than by such an idea of these contrasts as might be afforded by any secular generalization. And here, except for those who are privileged to enter into the mystical consciousness, the account of religious values ends. God is "an Other Mind," "an individual Subject, wholly active," "the Eternal Substance . . . known as such," "the Eternal Order of things," "that which does whatever substance is found to do."²³ The net advantage which accrues to man from the existence or knowledge of such a being, is, apart from the immediate cognitive value itself, the moralizing value of detachment and the social value of a companion in misery. For the rest, one is left to acquire a taste for things as they are, or a poise of mind that shall enable one to face the facts without flinching. Except for the social value itself, these values are simply the values which man may manage to earn *whatever be the specific nature of the world*. And the social nature, as here defined, guarantees nothing whatsoever except a social relation as such. Its value would be great only in case of great extremity, or in case love could be so exclusively bestowed upon this abstract object as to make all other losses negligible.

We are told, however, that God has "a responsiveness of his own," a superlative loveliness, I take it, in which all values are somehow caught up and preserved, and that "herein lies the immediate experience of the personality of God."²⁴ But here again we are doomed to disappointment, as I fear must always be the case when

²³ Meaning of God in Human Experience, pp. 332, 336.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 336.

we look to the report of the mystical consciousness. "I shall always be more certain *that* God is, than *what* he is." "Man knows well that he is not alone; he does not know so well in what companionship he is." "May it be that the mystic is more sure *that* he is sure than of *what* he is sure—except that he is sure of God and of his own relation to God?"²⁵ I gather from the balance of the text as well as from these admissions, that the mystical experience is essentially an experience of conviction. For some reason our author holds that "in these matters, the *that* actually precedes the *what*, both in time and in importance."²⁶ Why there should be any importance whatsoever in intensity of conviction so long as there is doubt as to its object, is difficult to see, unless indeed one falls back upon the hygienic value of the state itself. In any case, the mere existence of a peculiarly intense state of conviction which may attach itself to different objects cannot be regarded as evidence for any of these objects, and irresistibly suggests a subjective explanation.

There is the best of authority, as well as of evidence, for regarding mysticism as a type of emotionality, a subjective form of conviction, in which any content may be presented or any object judged. Mysticism may, as James has pointed out, be ascetic or self-indulgent, dualistic or monistic, personal or impersonal, naturalistic as with Walt Whitman, or supernaturalistic as with Saint Augustine or Bunyan. "The fact is," concludes James, "that the mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own. It is capable of forming matrimonial alliance with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies, provided only they can find a place in their framework for its peculiar emotional

²⁵ *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 296, 317, 453–454.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

mood.”²⁷ The ideas precipitated by mystical experiences re-echo the normal experiences or thoughts of the time. Their importance or truth may be realized for the first time, but they are not original. “Generally speaking,” says Höffding, “they have their source in the circle of traditional ideas with which the subject was already familiar, but which he had previously disregarded.”²⁸ Thus Bunyan says of his Christian inspiration: “This made a strange seizure on my spirit; it brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart of all those tumultuous thoughts that before did use, like masterless hell-hounds, to roar and bellow and make a hideous noise within me. It showed me that Jesus Christ had not quite forsaken and cast off my soul.”²⁹ Can one doubt that Bunyan in another age and environment and with another dogmatic tradition, would have interpreted the same experience in other terms?

The conviction itself is more simply accounted for than by the reality of the object which it reports. Is there any one who has not had an inspirational or ecstatic dream, from which he has alas! awakened; or a flash of insight that has felt profound only to turn stale or commonplace upon reflection? And can any one distinguish such illusory experiences from veridical insight except by the rationalizing consciousness? If the mystical experience is to be regarded as cognitive, it must be tested in sober moments of observation and analysis. Taken in its immediacy, it is equivocal and variable. That religious beliefs should assume a mystical intensity and vividness is well, *provided they be true*. There is a bathos in clearness and articulation, but there is no other purge from the confusion and error to which moods of inspiration are otherwise liable. The objection

²⁷ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 425, 426.

²⁸ *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 102.

²⁹ Quoted by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 186.

to an appeal to the mystical experience lies not only in the doubtfulness or emptiness of its report but in its discrediting of the critical consciousness, so hardly won and so incomparably important.

In leaving this type of religious philosophy, let me restate in a word what seems to me to be its characteristic defect. We are to identify the consummation of hope with the totality of things as they are. But to accomplish this unnatural union, it proves necessary either to cultivate an acquiescence in things as they are, an acquiescence that may be tinged with a sort of sublimated love, provided reality be conceived as content of a universal mind; or to abandon the ordinary canons and tests of thought and acquire a mood of ecstatic conviction to which one imputes the maximum both of truth and value. In the first case, one adjusts hope to reality, which is always possible theoretically and even psychologically in the worst of worlds. Such an equilibrium is gained by the abandonment of all values save one's personal peace of mind. In the second case, one loses sight both of reality and of values, or at least of all values save the sensuous value of the ecstatic state itself. This type of religious philosophy, no less than the last, is a counsel of desperation, a last resort. I will not say that it is unjustifiable, but only that it is to be held in reserve until another possibility has been canvassed. This other possibility is the responsiveness of the cosmic reality to our concrete empirical preferences. I say "responsiveness" because I take it to be self-evident that our empirical interests are not already realized in the existing nature of things. But is there ground for believing that cosmic reality will eventually let us have our way; or that our interests may be efficacious and in the long run triumphant? Whatever be the answer, of one thing I feel certain, namely, that a favorable answer would be the best news that philosophy could report.

4. By "progressivism," then, I mean a philosophy of religion that justifies the naïve and daily practical hope that we may some day have those particular things which we want, such as wisdom, power, harmony, long life, virtue, friends, universal happiness, together with the removal of fear, pain, sin, death, and all the innumerable miseries that now beset us. If it could be shown that some hope of this empirical and differential kind is well founded, there would be so much the less need of the consolations of religion, or these consolations could be reserved to offset the residual misgivings that would abundantly remain.

Hobhouse's *Development and Purpose* is an inspiring example of patient philosophical research. Some twenty-six years ago, dissatisfied with what he took to be the theoretically premature and morally confusing spiritual philosophy of the Anglo-Hegelians, the author set to work to study the actual course of natural evolution, with special reference to the development of mind in animals and man, and the development of the human mind and will as exhibited in the history of society. The results of these investigations he published in two works: *Mind in Evolution* (1901), and *Morals in Evolution* (1906). In 1896 he had already published the result of his examination of fundamental concepts (*Theory of Knowledge*), especially as to the nature of mechanical causation and organism. He now gives us the larger generalizations which he believes the results of his previous special studies to justify. He presents his conclusion, he says, "not as something which is to satisfy all emotional cravings or end all intellectual doubts, not because it is artistically complete or even because it is proved with demonstrative certainty, but merely on the humble and prosaic ground that, on a complete and impartial review of a vast mass of evidence, it is shown to be probably true."³⁰

³⁰ *Development and Purpose*, p. 372.

The conclusion falls into two parts, that based more strictly on "a comprehensive review of experience," and that attained by the analysis of the conception of causality. The review of experience establishes, in the author's judgment, the central place of self-conscious mind in natural evolution. The first stage is the development of mind, and the second the development *by* mind. Blind struggle and natural selection may have been the chief factors in bringing about the existence of man, but once established and enabled to function in its own characteristic manner, the human mind has introduced a new principle of correlation and harmony. The guarantee of the permanence of achievements of this type lies in the mind's power to assimilate and regulate those very forces which would otherwise disintegrate and annul it. "Only if mind should once reach the point at which it could control all the conditions of its life, could this danger be permanently averted. Now it seemed to me that it is precisely on this line that modern civilization has made its chief advance, that through science it is beginning to control the physical conditions of life, and that on the side of ethics and religion it is forming those ideas of the unity of the race, and of the subordination of law, morals, and social constitutions generally to the needs of human development, which are the conditions of the control that is required."³¹

The transition from this empirical generalization of history to the more fundamental or metaphysical view is made by an analysis of the conception of mechanism and teleology. An examination of the action of the organism reveals a determination of part by whole, and of present by future. In life, action is determined not merely *a tergo* and indifferently, but by its tendency to produce specific effects upon co-ordinate processes. We thus reach the definition of a purpose as "a cause conditioned in its operation by its own tendency," and of an

³¹ Development and Purpose, pp. xxii-xxiii.

organic unity as a group of such causes governed by "the tendency of their combination towards a certain result."³² This same *modus operandi* is characteristic of mind and of society. Is it also characteristic of the cosmic process as a whole? Hobhouse concludes that the larger synthetic operations of nature cannot otherwise be explained. I cannot here enter into the merits of the argument. He concludes that "the evolutionary process can be best understood as the effect of a purpose slowly working itself out under limiting conditions which it brings successively under control."³³ Both the empirical and the analytical arguments lead us "to conceive the world-process as a development of organic harmony through the extension of control by Mind operating under mechanical conditions which it comes by degrees to master."³⁴ As in the case of the previous types of religious philosophy, I shall not attempt to argue the strictly philosophical questions. Let me say only that a more careful, well-reasoned, and convincing examination of the question of purposiveness and progress it would be difficult to find. But what shall be said of the religious value of this type of philosophy?

First, as to its results. It attributes to the cosmic reality an actual working tendency in a forward direction coincident with man's hopes of first intent. It promises the fulfilment, through the complicity of the cosmic order, of those ends for which men are actually exerting themselves. It does not promise something else, or offer consolation for inevitable failure, or teach renunciation, but encourages the belief that the enterprise of civilization in which men are actually engaged, civilization with its concrete and specific values, will *succeed* in that historical future towards which its efforts are directed. It not only defines reality as friendly to man, but as friendly to man's actual interests. Furthermore, it endows man

³² Development and Purpose, pp. 318, 319.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

himself with power to make his way. Instead of teaching man's dependence on a power to whom he should be grateful for small favors, whom he should love as the dog licks the hand of the master that beats him, it teaches that the masterful will moves in him, giving assurance to his hopes and strength to his hands.

And this philosophy confirms not only the hopes of man, but also his moral judgment. Man is not asked to adjust his ideals to reality, but to persist in his ideals. He is encouraged to pursue with better heart and with a broader cosmic outlook the same end that moves him to earn his living, support his family, make much of himself, and exert himself to improve the state of mankind. These secular motives are taken up into what Chesterton calls "the oldest and the best of all causes, the cause of creation against destruction, the cause of yes against no, the cause of the seed against the stony earth, and the star against the abyss."³⁵ The religion which here finds justification is that religion of *service* which received its classic formulation a generation ago in the essays of John Stuart Mill. "A virtuous human being," he said, "assumes in this theory the exalted character of a fellow-laborer with the Highest, a fellow-combatant in the great strife; contributing his little, which by the aggregation of many like himself becomes much, towards that ascendancy and ultimately complete triumph of good over evil."³⁶

A word, finally, as to the method of religious philosophy which is represented by this work of Hobhouse. Its great merit, quite apart from the correctness of its results, lies in its clear recognition of comparative values. The values of reality itself, as these bear upon the actual human interest at stake, are of first and most momentous importance. And second in importance is correct knowl-

³⁵ Chesterton's *Bernard Shaw*, pp. 102-103.

³⁶ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 116.

edge of this reality, in order that man may guide his action aright. The subjective and imaginative values must not be allowed to obscure the importance of the values of reality and true belief. Not that I would for a moment wish to discredit the values of fancy and subjectivity, or, for that matter, rob man of any atom of comfort which his faculties may enable him to extract from his lot. But it would be fatuous to seek consolation so long as, or wherever, it is possible to remove the need for it. If the spectacle of existence and destiny be unendurable, by all means let the lights be turned low; but man should see things in a *dim* religious light only, if need be, after he has seen them clearly. He should be satisfied to regard life as a predicament only after he is sure that it is not an opportunity. It is possible both to seek the best and be prepared for the worst. Discipline is justified because total success is impossible. Compensation is justified when failure is inevitable. If sober and vigorous thought does not justify hope, then man may well fall back upon his imagination, and nourish illusions that shall be flattering in proportion to their unreality. But this will take care of itself. The optimistic bias of the imagination is the one religious source that will never fail. It should be the part of a philosophy of religion to scan the cosmic horizon for signs that shall be as hopeful as possible but that shall first of all be trustworthy; so that if there be any chance of *really reaching the haven originally desired*, it shall not be lost from a too hasty resignation or abandonment to soothing distraction. A philosophy of religion, in short, should devote itself to the construction, not of the most hopeful belief, but of the most credible hope.